

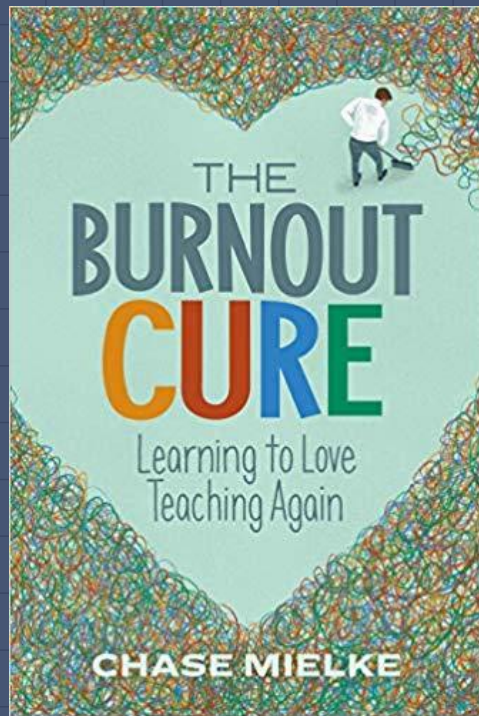
# The Science of Stress and How to Help Kids Manage

The background features a dark blue grid. A white line graph with circular markers is overlaid, showing a fluctuating trend. Below the line graph, there is a bar chart with numerous vertical bars of varying heights, all in shades of blue.

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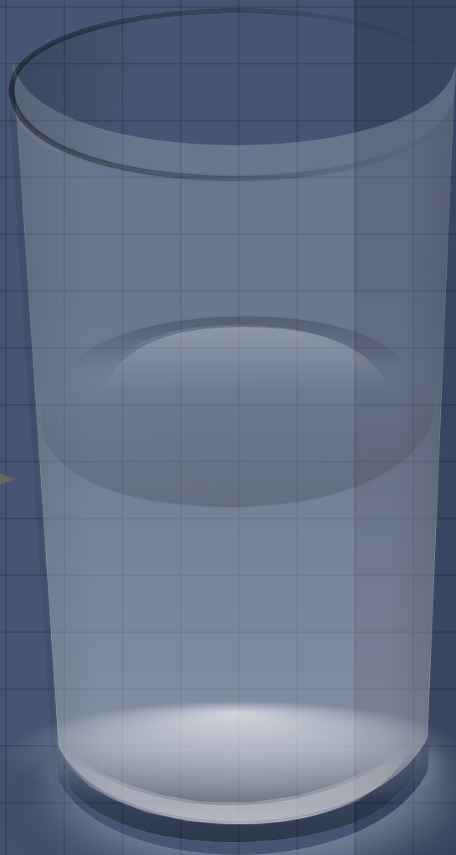
# Allostatic Load

Allostasis: How the body responds to stress in order to regain homeostasis

Acute Stress: Temporary rise  
in stress levels

Chronic Stress: Long-term rise  
in stress levels

**Norm - Generally, how stressed are you?**



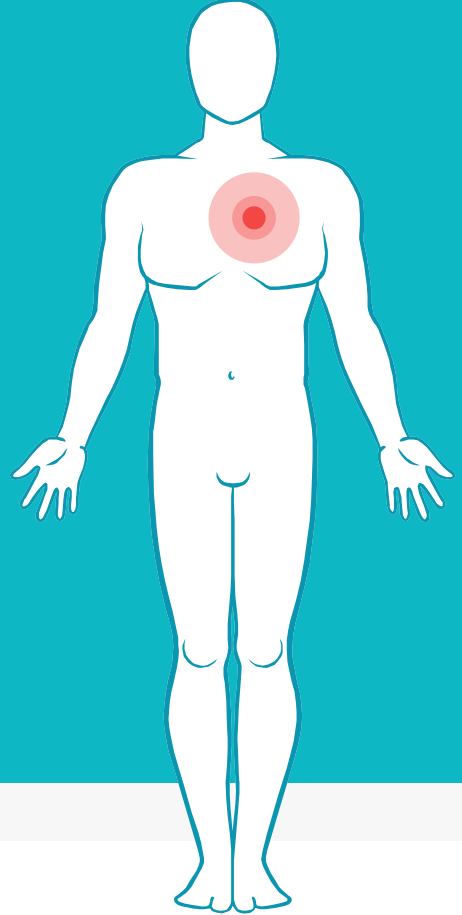
**Volatility- How quickly do your stress levels rise?**



**Regulation- How quickly do you de-stress from situations?**



# STRESS MANAGEMENT



# 1. DISTRACTION

Find something to get your mind off the stressor

# Why it works

- Homeostasis: Your body wants to regulate and reduce cortisol



# Common Strategies

- Sleep
- Hobbies (sports, arts, movement-based activities)
- Social Interaction (minus venting or bringing up the topic)
- Physical exercise

# Challenges

- Sometimes we struggle to get our mind off it
- It doesn't address the stressor or reduce its likelihood in the future

# When to use it

- When the stressor won't likely return (e.g. It's in the past)
- When it's okay to remove yourself from the situation
- When emotional hijacking is high

## 2. DISCUSS

Process the stressor in a way that reduces rumination

# Why it works

- Processing emotion helps activate the prefrontal cortex and slow down your emotional response

# Common Strategies

- Talking with a trusted person
- Journaling/writing
- Prayer/spiritual practice

# Challenges

- Too much processing (without progress steps) can kick our amygdala back on
- The wrong process person can make it worse (e.g. Gives unsolicited advice or makes it about him/her)

# TIP!

- Process: Revisiting the stressor
- Progress: Focusing on action steps for the future
- Aim for a high

## Progress-to-Process Ratio

- Ex: 40% processing the stressor; 60% focusing on positive action steps for the future



# When to use it

- When distraction methods aren't working
- When rumination keeps happening

# 3. DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM

USE PROBLEM SOLVING TO REDUCE THE  
IMPACT OF THE STRESSOR

# Why it works

- Positive action boosts our resilience
- Reducing the stressor...reduces the stress

# Common Steps

1. Identify the actual problem
2. Cognitive Flexibility: Generate as many solutions as you can
3. Anticipate challenges and make plans for them
4. Take an action step

# Challenges

- Some problems we can't solve (we can still brainstorm coping strategies, though).
- Without optimistic explanatory style, if we fail at our efforts we increase stress again.

# When to use it

- The stressor is likely to occur
- When your actions can influence the outcome

# 4. DISPUTE

Use mental reframes to reduce your rumination or resentment

# Why it works

- Thoughts can create or intensify our levels of cortisol; shifting thoughts can reduce this.



# DISPUTATION METHODS



	Definition	Example
Alternatives	Identify alternative causes that lead to this adversity	"I didn't do as well as I wanted on the test, but this is my first time ever taking an AP class and a lot of others are struggling too."
Evidence	Look for factual evidence to realize that the adversity isn't permanent or pervasive	"I got a C-. But, I can re-take it, there will be other tests, and my grade only dropped a couple percent."
Implications	Recognize that just because you had an adversity, doesn't mean a pervasive thing about you	"Just because I got a bad grade, doesn't mean I'm an idiot or that I'll never understand. I'm just struggling right now."
Usefulness	Question whether your belief is useful. If not, adopt a more motivating thought	"Moping about a test that's in the past isn't going to help me keep trying. I can only control what my next action is."

# Challenges

- It takes a lot of practice and repeating the reframes to improve your disputation

# When to use it

- The stressor is in the past but it is still affecting you

# 5. DEEP BREATHING (MINDFULNESS)

Use focused, non-judgmental attention to reduce stress

# Why it works

- Non-judgmental thinking can detach our emotional response
- Deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system
- Focused attention helps us shift thoughts from rumination
- Thought-noting reduces amygdala activity

# Challenges

- It takes a lot of practice to get long-term results
- It is difficult at first